

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing, reexamination and reconsideration of the application identified in caption, as amended, pursuant to and consistent with 37 C.F.R. §1.116 and in light of the remarks which follow, are respectfully requested.

By the above amendments, Applicants have added new claims 34-36 and canceled claims 25-27 and 30. Accordingly, claims 22-24, 28, 29 and 31-36 are now pending in this application.

Turning to the Official Action, claims 22-24, 28, 29 and 31-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 3,658,810 (*Tanaka et al.*) or WO A-96/22974 (*WO '974*). These rejections should be withdrawn for at least the following reasons.

The Office Action indicated that claims 25-27 and 30 would be allowable if written in independent form. Claims 25-27 have now been rewritten as new independent claims 34-36, respectively. The feature of claim 30 has been added to claim 22, thereby effectively rewriting claim 30 in independent form. All other claims are directly dependent upon amended claim 22.

In view of the above amendments, it is apparent that the §103(a) rejection has been obviated and should be withdrawn.

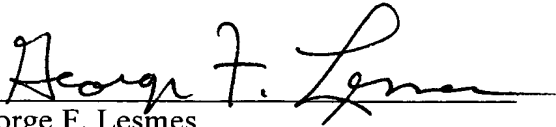
From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is believed to be next in order, and such action is earnestly solicited.

If there are any questions concerning this paper or the application in general, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

Date: March 24, 2004

By: 
George F. Lesmes
Registration No. 19,995

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(703) 836-6620